

Caucasian Model UN-2020

«PEACE HUB»

Report of the expert of the General Assembly

**Rights of indigenous peoples to preserve their
native language and literature, folk traditions
and customs**



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I.Key aspects of the agenda.

Languages that comprehensively affect identity, cultural diversity, spirituality, communication, social integration, education and development are of great importance to people and the planet. Languages not only reflect history, traditions, memory, traditional knowledge and unique ways of thinking, transmitting the meaning and peoples' expression, and that is moreover they serve as a means by which people construct their future.

A language is one of the crucial items of human rights and fundamental freedoms and is essential for achieving sustainable development and ensuring good governance, peace and reconciliation. The right of each person to freely use one or another language at his discretion is one of the indispensable conditions for freedom of thought, freedom of opinion and right to freely express them, access to education and information, freedom of employment and other values, affirmed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Linguistic diversity contributes to the maintenance of cultural identity and diversity and to intercultural dialogue. It is equally important to ensure quality education for all, create inclusive knowledge-based societies and preserve the cultural and documentary heritage. Besides, it ensures the continuous transfer of indigenous knowledge from generation to generation, which is vital for solving global problems. Despite the tremendous value of languages, their extinction continues at an alarming rate throughout the world. This is a matter of serious concern.

Nowadays, only 3 percent of the world's population speak 96 percent of the total number (about 6,700) of languages in the world. Although indigenous peoples make up less than 6 percent of the total population in the world, they speak more than 4,000 languages. According to conservative estimates, more than half of the world's languages will disappear by 2100. By the end of this century, according to other estimates, up to 95 per cent of the world's languages may be extinct or seriously endangered. Most of the languages at risk of extinction are indigenous languages. According to some reports, one indigenous language dies every two weeks. Indigenous

languages not only serve as a means of communication, but they also reflect vast and complex knowledge systems developed for millennia. They are Central to the identity of indigenous peoples, the preservation of their cultures, worldviews and concepts, and also the expression of self-determination.

This situation is exacerbated by globalization and the proliferation of a small number of culturally dominant languages. Increasingly (More frequently), languages are no longer transmitted from parents to children.

Indigenous languages are also complex systems of knowledge, developed and accumulated for thousands of years. Local languages are a kind of cultural treasure trove; they are the repository of diversity and the key both to understanding the environment and to making the most of it for the local population as well as for all mankind. They support and nurture local cultural specificities, traditions and values that have stood the test of millennia.

The language of each indigenous people is a unique system and conceptual basis for understanding the world. In those areas that have a particular ecological, economic or socio-cultural significance for the respective people, a rich lexical fund is being formed. Knowledge is often reflected or encoded in specific words and, therefore, is not always easily transferable to other languages. Accordingly, the disappearance of indigenous languages may entail the loss of important knowledge that can be put at the service of humanity and sustainable development. Thus, the disappearance of the language has a tremendous negative impact on the culture of the indigenous people concerned, as well as on world cultural diversity. It threatens the irretrievable loss of unique ways of knowing the world and interacting with it. The factors that make languages endangered may vary in different communities and geographic areas, but they all pose a huge challenge to indigenous peoples: be it assimilation, forced displacement, educational inequality, illiteracy, migration, or other forms of discrimination that ultimately lead to a weakening of culture or language to the point that they are threatened with extinction. In practice, this can happen when parents or

elders stop transmitting indigenous languages to their children and these languages are no longer used.

The problems associated with indigenous languages indicate significant systematic inequality and discrimination, which affect a number of other areas, including politics, laws and justice, health, cultural traditions, cultural identity and the biosphere, as well as access to information and means of communication and, accordingly, the entire field of scientific activity.

II. Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Article 13 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples provides that indigenous peoples have the right to revive, use, develop and pass on

to their future generations their languages, traditions of oral art, writing and literature. It also stipulates that states should take effective measures to protect this right by ensuring transfer during political, judicial and administrative processes.

Articles 14 and 16 establish the right of indigenous peoples to create their own education systems and the media in their native languages and to have access to education in their native language .The rights of indigenous peoples in the linguistic sphere are also guaranteed in the Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (No. 169) of the International Labor Organization. Other relevant international instruments include, but are not limited to, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Revival and development of indigenous languages.

Some indigenous peoples successfully revive and develop their languages through their own initiatives.

Native Hawaiians contribute to the spread of secondary education in the Hawaiian language in public schools where subjects are taught entirely in the Hawaiian language, which was on the verge of extinction in the 1970s and was restored as the

official language of the state of Hawaii in 1978. Interaction between the government and indigenous peoples has also played an important role in preserving the Itelmen language in Kamchatka (Russian Federation). There, on the basis of the rights enshrined in the Constitution, the government of Kamchatka initiated various programmes for the development of the indigenous language, such as radio and television programmes and cultural competitions, in addition to teaching the indigenous language at school. At the same time, the initiatives undertaken by the communities themselves have taken advantage of new technologies to distribute songs through Internet music channels and smartphone applications in the Itelmen language. Meanwhile, many other indigenous peoples do not manage to preserve their language. Most governments are aware of the language crisis and have introduced legislation, strategies and programmes to address it. However, more efforts are needed. Chile had legislation and programmes to protect nine indigenous languages, but they provided for only four languages to be taught in school and only if more than 20 per cent of indigenous students were present (the majority of indigenous peoples in Chile live in urban areas, where they are a small minority). Lack of resources is often cited as a reason for the lack of adequate measures. Funding is often provided only for recordings, including audiovisual recordings with transcription, translation and notes, and only a small amount is allocated to language revival programmes.

United Nations' measures in response to the language crisis.

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues has consistently drawn attention to the threat of the extinction of indigenous languages and has called for action to disseminate and protect languages. Back in 2003, the Permanent Forum recommended that governments introduce the use of indigenous languages in public administration in indigenous territories, where appropriate. In 2005, the Forum recommended that United Nations country offices take steps to expand their work on publishing publications in indigenous languages.

For several years, the Permanent Forum also encouraged States to promote the establishment of centers for the study of indigenous languages and culture in universities and called on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to support such initiatives.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the General Assembly in 2015, aims to provide indigenous peoples with equal access to education and training at all levels, as indicated in target 4.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

To accomplish this task, it is strongly recommended to use indigenous languages in education and training. More recently, in response to the recommendation made by the Permanent Forum in 2016, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2019 the International Year of Indigenous Languages in order to attract attention to the acute problem of the loss of indigenous languages and the urgent need to preserve, revive and encourage them at the national and international levels. This year will be led by UNESCO.

III. The history of the protection of the rights of indigenous peoples to preserve their native language

A language problem in the context of UN activities In recent years, several international normative acts and declarations have appeared that testify to the global awareness of the importance of preserving small languages. Among these acts are the following:

1. The Vienna Declaration adopted at the World Conference on Human Rights (1993) and affirming the right of “members of national and other minorities to use their mother tongue” (Article 19);

2. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) addresses the issue of language in education.

It emphasizes that language should also be considered as one of the values of education.

29 states that the education of the child should be aimed at developing the personality of the child and fostering respect for his cultural identity, language and values

3. The call of the UN General Assembly to pay greater attention to multilingualism (December 1999);

UN General Assembly Resolution 52/262 (Part 2), focusing on the conservation and protection of all languages

4. UNESCO Act on the Position in Education 2003 “Education in a multilingual world” (link to document https://www.un.org/en/events/iyl/brochure/monitoring_2002.pdf)

5. Report of the UN Secretary-General at the 58th session (2003) on measures to protect, disseminate and preserve all languages of the world.

6. In addition, the importance of linguistic diversity and its distribution is emphasized in § 52-53 of the “Declaration of Principles” adopted by the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva (December 2003).

7. To optimize the promotion of multilingualism at the 171st meeting, the Executive Board (April 2005) agreed with the proposal by the Director-General of UNESCO to develop “a comprehensive multisectoral strategy for languages in UNESCO”.

The strategic goal of this program is twofold: firstly, the widespread preservation and increase of linguistic diversity, and secondly, focus on the main trend of “language distribution (that is, awareness of the importance of languages and linguistic diversity) in politics, in all areas of the UN. From this perspective, language becomes a

factor that must be taken into account when developing, implementing and evaluating development programs around the world.

1. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2016 [on the report of the Third Committee (A / 71/481)] - The rights of indigenous peoples.

2. 9. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Adopted by General Assembly resolution 61/295 of September 13, 2007 (link to document <https://undocs.org/ru/A/RES/61/295>)

3. 10. Report of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues on the work of the fifth session of the Economic and Social Council (New York, 15–26 May 2006) (link to document <https://undocs.org/ru/E/C.19/2006/11>)

4. Most of these texts deal with possible individual rights; for the rights of groups and entire peoples to use national languages, international standards and measures to protect them have so far been developed to a much lesser extent.

IV. Language Conservation Activities in the General Context of the Work of UNESCO.

Recognizing the need for a comprehensive vision of language problems in all aspects falling within UNESCO's competence, the Organization has recently paid great attention to language problems, developing such normative acts as the “Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity” and the “Action Plan” adopted in 2001, as well as the “Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage” and “Recommendations on the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace” (the last two adopted at the UNESCO General Conference in October 2003)

The Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity is perhaps the most comprehensive text adopted by UNESCO in the field of culture.

Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity

The first in the list of UNESCO normative acts - the “Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity” - approves, inter alia, the relationship between biological, cultural and linguistic diversity; this action plan recommends that participating States, in collaboration with language communities, take steps in the following areas:

1. maintaining linguistic diversity and supporting the use, formation and dissemination of as many languages as possible;
2. promoting linguistic diversity at all levels of education, stimulating the study of several languages from an early age;
3. the inclusion of traditional pedagogical systems in the educational process, taking into account the preservation and, if possible, full use of the methods specific for this culture of communication and information transfer;
4. Promotion of public access to global information networks, including the spread of linguistic diversity in cyberspace.

Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

The objectives of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, among other provisions, include a clause on the preservation of languages as a “tool for the transmission of the intangible cultural heritage”. Thus, the key role of languages in the expression and transmission of traditions from generation to generation is recognized, experience and elements of heritage. Some aspects of this heritage such as oral expressions and traditions, are totally language dependent. It is expected that language conservation measures will find their place within the framework of this Convention. The Convention — the first effective international instrument of its kind, is likely to enter into force in mid-2006.

Recommendations for the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace.

The "Recommendations on the dissemination and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace" adopted at the UNESCO General conference in 2003 recognizes the importance of the dissemination of multilingualism and universal access to information and knowledge, especially in the public interest, and the conviction is reiterated that UNESCO should play a leading role in promoting universal access to information, multilingualism and cultural diversity in the world's information networks. Many UNESCO documents and programmes emphasize the importance of multilingualism and the need to introduce and disseminate it through education.

Motivations driving the activities of UNESCO.

UNESCO's work to promote linguistic diversity, multilingualism and the preservation of endangered languages is based on the recognition that language is not just an important means of communication or cultural vector and filter of worldviews and values, but also an integral part of the identity and identity of both the individual and the society in general. This important UN conceptual guideline was elaborated in 1998 at the Stockholm Conference on Cultural Policy Development.

The cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, "education for all" advocated by UNESCO cannot be achieved without the appropriate participation of all stakeholders in the dissemination of languages - including native languages and endangered languages - and multilingualism.

UNESCO is convinced that the disappearance of any language means an irreparable loss. UNESCO is concerned because:

- humanity is evolving and needs diversity;
- languages reflect historical experience;
- languages are an instrument of socialization, expression and transmission of social and cultural traditions;
- languages contribute to the increase of human knowledge;

- languages are amazingly rich and diverse products of the creative mind of man;
- languages are a means of self-identification, enhance it and are of great value to those who speak them.

There are only eight languages spoken by more than one hundred million people. About 2.5 billion people were born in areas with national languages / dialects, most of them are monolingual, and therefore language plays a huge role and permeates all areas of their lives.

On the other hand, about 500 languages are used by less than 100 speakers, and about 3,400 languages are used by less than 10,000 speakers. The language conditions in which children born in very large and very small language communities fall are different, and therefore their attitude towards their native languages, groups and multilingualism will inevitably be different.

In fact, they are born unequal in their linguistic rights or, more cautiously, on different sides of the communicative line of demarcation.

UNESCO Activities for the Conservation of Endangered Languages

The promotion of multilingualism is carried out by all sectors of UNESCO (Communication, Culture, Education, Social and Human Sciences), to the competence of which it belongs, and is carried out in many intersectoral projects. In this article, I will focus on UNESCO's efforts to conserve endangered languages.

The “Endangered Languages Program” is one of the main lines of work of the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Division of the Culture Sector.

Four priority lines of action characterize this program:

1. Raising awareness about the problem of the disappearance of languages (among the leaders of individual states, the press, people speaking "big" languages, small language groups, etc.) and the need to preserve linguistic diversity:

- An example of such an activity could be a joint project of UNESCO, UN Works and Discovery Communications. A series of 20 short programs on various endangered languages was created, which was broadcast by Discovery to more than 100 million people in different countries.

Another example is the UNESCO Atlas of World Languages Endangered (1996, 2001), which aroused the keen interest among scholars and journalists and became a guide for the general public. The atlas was reprinted twice with the addition of information about endangered languages in all parts of the world; Now it is gradually becoming available on the Internet, starting from the African continent. The online publication was the result of an initiative of two sectors - Culture and Communication and

Information - within the framework of the UNESCO programs “Disappearing Languages” and “Multilingualism in Cyberspace”.

- The main line of the action “Strengthening the Interconnections between Biological and Cultural Diversity as the Basis of Acceptable Development”, which unites the efforts of the UNESCO Culture and Natural Sciences sector, pays special attention to the study of the importance of linguistic diversity for the transfer of traditional knowledge and the conservation of biological diversity. 2. Increased opportunities and support for regional language policies

- Several forums organized by UNESCO in the 1990s aimed at increasing the capacity and dissemination of regional language policies in Member States (with a special focus on Africa). For example, at an intergovernmental conference on language policy in Africa, held in Harare in 1997, special attention was paid to local indigenous languages and the problem of multilingualism. In 2004, the project “Enhancing the Preservation of Languages, Oral Traditions and Methods of Expression in Central and South Africa” was launched.

- In 2004/2005, 5 pilot projects directly implemented by local non-governmental institutions and researchers, 14 national and regional projects were

entrusted to the UNESCO Regional Office in different parts of the world (with special attention to Africa and the Asia-Pacific region). An example is the project “Preservation of the Endangered Languages of the Indigenous Peoples of Siberia”, supervised by the UNESCO Moscow Office.

One of the elements of this project is the “Round Table on Endangered Languages of the Indigenous Peoples of Siberia”. The objectives of the Round Table include analysis of the current situation and problems of small Siberian languages and discussion of appropriate measures for their preservation. Additional project activities include the creation of a CD-ROM containing a bilingual (Russian-

English) database of endangered languages of Siberian peoples, and summary materials the aforementioned Round Table, as well as the creation of an information portal dedicated to the minor languages of the peoples of Siberia, which will be available on the website of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences (with reference to the website of the UNESCO Moscow Bureau).

3. Enhanced international cooperation

- In March 2003, UNESCO brought together experts from around the world to strengthen UN activities in the field of endangered languages. The purpose of the meeting was to identify and strengthen the role of UNESCO in supporting endangered languages. At the meeting the tasks were solved by developing criteria for assessing the language as an endangered one, reviewing the current state of languages in various parts of the world, presenting to the UNESCO Secretary-General mechanisms and strategies for preserving endangered languages and supporting and disseminating linguistic and cultural diversity. Language Assessment

The result of the 2003 meeting was the adoption of UNESCO recommendations and a document entitled “The Viability and Danger of the Extinction of Languages”. The purpose of this document was to outline ways to increase the vitality of small languages. It defines nine criteria for assessing the state of a language.

For each factor, the number of points can vary from “5”, which means “is safe”, to “0” - “language has disappeared” (“4” - “the situation causes concern”; “3” - “the language is threatened with extinction”; “2” - “the language is in serious danger”; “1” - “the language is in critical condition”). This six-level system is the last in a large number of attempts of this kind of classification.

Nine factors can be divided into three subgroups: the first six factors assess the overall viability of the language, the next two determine the current position of the language, the latter concerns the availability and accessibility of information about the language.

1. Transmission of language from generation to generation.

Usually it is the information about whether a language is passed on to future generations that is used to assess the viability of a given language.

2. The absolute number of speakers.

Small ethnic language communities can disappear more quickly as a result of epidemics, hostilities or natural disasters than larger groups. Small groups can also be more easily assimilated by neighboring large language groups, losing their own language and culture. However, there are linguistic communities, numbering less than a thousand people, which have remained stable for centuries (examples of such communities can be found in the Russian Federation on the territory of the Republic of Dagestan).

3. The ratio of the number of speakers of this language to the total number of ethnic groups.

The ratio of the number of speakers of the native language to the total number of this ethnic group is a clear indicator of the vitality of the language.

4. Changes in language use areas.

Who, with whom and what speaks in this language, and what are the trends in this area?

5. New areas of language use; media

Some language groups successfully expand the scope of their language and introduce it into new areas; but for most languages this fails. A language that fails to adapt to the requirements of modernity inevitably loses its significance and prestige.

6. Training materials and literacy level in a given language

Language education plays a significant role in its vitality, as literacy is closely linked to social and economic development. Books and training materials on various topics are needed for all age groups and all levels of language proficiency.

State language policies can support minorities in preserving and protecting their language, or seek to assimilate them. Government and official position in relation to the language can be a significant factor in both the preservation and destruction of the language

8. Attitude to the language of the members of the corresponding ethnic group

People, as a rule, value their language, want to transmit and spread it. However, it also happens that they are ashamed of it and therefore do not want to distribute it; sometimes they even consider the use of language an obligation imposed on them and therefore avoid speaking it.

9. Level of documentation of this language

A large number of documentation and publications on this language contributes to its standardization, helps the language meet the requirements of modernity.

These nine factors can be used for the first acquaintance with the language situation and for its analysis and classification. Experts who participated in the March

2003 meeting warned that their proposed method of measuring the threat level for each particular language should not be applied blindly. Language may be successful on one of these criteria, but on the other need urgent support. All factors listed above are only basic principles and should be applied taking into account the local situation and the objectives of the specific study.

V. Measures taken by the United Nations in response to the language crisis.

The United Nations permanent forum on indigenous issues consistently draws attention to the threat of the disappearance of indigenous languages and calls for action to promote and protect languages.

As early as 2003, the Permanent forum recommended that governments introduce the use of indigenous languages in public administration in indigenous territories, where appropriate. In 2005, the Forum recommended that United Nations country offices take steps to enhance their work in publishing publications in indigenous languages. For several years the Permanent forum has also encouraged States to promote the establishment of centres for the study of indigenous languages and cultures and encouraged the United Nations educational, scientific and cultural Organization (UNESCO) to support such initiatives.

The 2030 agenda for sustainable development, adopted by the General Assembly in 2015, aims to ensure that indigenous peoples have equal access to education and training at all levels, as it is stated in target 4.5 of the sustainable development goals. The use of indigenous languages in education and training is persistently recommended for this purpose.

Most recently, in response to a recommendation made by the Permanent forum in 2016, The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2019 as the International year of indigenous languages, in order to draw attention to the acute problem of the loss of indigenous languages and the urgent need to preserve, revive and promote them at the national and international levels.

This Year will be led by UNESCO.

The observation of the International year of indigenous languages in 2019 should contribute to the achievement of the goals of the United Nations Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, adopted by the International labour organization in 1989, Convention on indigenous peoples and tribal peoples (Convention Nº 169), of outcome document of the 2014 World Conference on indigenous populations (General Assembly resolution 69/2) and other relevant instruments, including UNESCO conventions and recommendations.

The holding of this international year in 2019 will also make an additional contribution to the effective implementation and strengthening of a large number of normative documents adopted by the international community, including provisions specifically aimed at promoting the use of languages and their protection.

VI. Conclusion.

By developing programs for endangered languages, UNESCO and other international organizations contribute to the preservation and dissemination of cultural and linguistic diversity, as well as to the diversity of our being and intangible heritage, which is heavily dependent on oral tradition.

Languages have always changed; the separation, absorption and disappearance of languages can be called a natural phenomenon, but the disappearance of languages today has taken on an unprecedented scale. Not all languages can be saved; actions to preserve and revive the language can only make sense with the support of the people who speak it.

It is necessary to inform the leadership of states, as well as to promote researchers, officials and those who speak small languages. It is not easy for the language to survive in modern conditions: for this it must be used in many important areas - for example,

in education, in the press, in government institutions; language should also be highly appreciated by those who speak it.

For this, a more complete and comprehensive documentation of the language is needed, which helps, in particular, when choosing or creating standard language forms, standardizing the written language, improving educational material, collecting and publishing literary and folklore texts. If we want to be able to assess the success of the implementation of the language policy and plan activities for the preservation of languages, we need data not only on the number of languages and the number of people who speak them, but also on the status, content and expansion of the use of languages, it is necessary to continue the detailed development of indicators, allowing to evaluate and monitor the state of languages, especially those that are endangered.

It must be remembered that the central role of indigenous peoples (“There is nothing for us without us”) is in accordance with the principle of self-determination and taking into account the potential for the development, revival and transmission to future generations of languages that reflect the wisdom and values of indigenous peoples, as well as their knowledge system and culture.

Language does not just reflect the human world and its culture. The most important function of a language is that it preserves the culture and passes it from generation to generation. That is why language plays such a significant, not to say decisive, role in the formation of personality, national character, ethnic community, people, nation.

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